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DUKAKIS, FLYNN KICK OFF RENOVATION PROJECT FOR 700 BOSTON APARTMENTS; GOVERNOR CALLS FOR REHABILITATION OF "EVERY SALVAGEABLE PROPERTY IN STATE"

Gov. Michael S. Dukakis, joined by Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn and members of the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP), today announced the start of renovations on more than 700 apartments for low-and moderate-income families throughout the city and repeated his call for a statewide effort to reclaim abandoned housing.

"If the Boston Housing Partnership--on which we have modeled the Massachusetts Housing Partnership I announced last week-- can rehabilitate 700 apartments in Boston, then there is no reasosn on earth why we can't rehabilitate every salvageable piece of housing across this state," Dukakis said. "If we are to provide opportunity for all, then we have an obligation to provide housing for all as well."

The Boston Housing Partnerhsip renovations are being funded through a combination of grants, including City of Boston funds, mortgage financing through state agencies, equity financing from investors and other financing from banks.

Critical to the renovation package is an $856,000 loan through the state's SHARP (State Housing Assistance for Rental Production) program and $22.3 million in financing from the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. The state will also provide rental subsidies for low-income residents of the rehabilitated buildings.

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"With so many of our citizens in need of decent, affordable housing, it is critical that we take bold, decisive steps to increase the availability of housing," Dukakis said. "The Boston Housing Partnership is one such bold step, bringing together state, city, private and neighborhood resources and attention to the housing problem.

Speaking in Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood along with Flynn and William S. Edgerly, chairman and president of State Street Bank and Trust and the chairman of the Partnership, Dukakis called the joint public-private venture to increase the available housing "for everyoone who needs an affordable place to live." The BHP is also a model for a larger state effort announced last week, the Massachusetts Housihg Partnership.

The BHP is involved in a citywide attempt to reclaim abandoned housing, a major priority on the governor's housing agenda.

In his State of the State speech Wednesday, Dukakis said, "it is unconscionable" that salvageable abandoned properties are going unused. "We are going to make every effort to reclaim this needed housing resource to ensure that all our citizens--hard pressed families, the homeless, and many others in substandard or unsuitable housing--can have decent shelter."

Dukakis praised the coalition of financial institutions, government agencies and neighborhood organizations which make up the BHP, saying the two-year effort shows "what can be accomplished when our aim is high. By working together with all of the people who have a real stake in the future of a city like Boston--from people at the basic neighborhood level, to the businesses which depend on the city's health for their livelihood--we can create innovative, forceful approaches to expanding housing and revitalizing neighborhoods."

"While this state has an enviable record in housing, we must strengthen our efforts to deal with the housing crisis. The withdrawal of federal interest and subsidies for housing has left a gaping hole that state government alone cannot fill. With the help of the private sector, community groups, civic leaders and others, we can help overcome this state's housing crisis," the governor said.

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Massachusetts has the model for a national program, and we think that other states will be looking to us in the future for guidance," he added.

Secretary of Communities and Development Amy S. Anthony said, "An important part of the BHP's success has been the involvement of neighborhood community development corporations, who have been working long and hard to reclaim housing and improve neighborhoods. Groups such as the Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services, who are active with the Partnership in this neighborhood, and others in the 10 Boston neighborhoods that make up the partnership, have been instrumental in finding these properties and pulling together local residents to support the BHP's plans.

"The state's SHARP program has been instrumental in making the BHP projects come about," Anthony added. "It proves the flexibility and effectiveness of SHARP to not only spur housing production for low-income people, but also to help reclaim abandoned properties."

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